

## **FAQ – Irma Stern Museum and the Irma Stern Collection**

### **The Irma Stern Museum House and moving the Collection**

**Q: Given that the Museum is temporarily closed, what is planned by the Trust for the medium-term future of the Collection and the Firs?**

A: The Collection, and The Firs, will continue in a rejuvenated guise – new exhibitions, new exhibition and branding partnerships, and new plans for how The Firs will live on, are all currently in negotiation and will be announced when the necessary arrangements and agreements are in place. Some of these, such as the collaborative exhibitions mentioned elsewhere in this document, have begun to roll out. It's important to make the point that Stern's legacy is being expanded and modernised and her work will be accessible to a wider audience. The Firs will continue to be part of that legacy but will be part of a greater whole.

**Q: What was behind the decision to move the collection to an archival facility?**

A: A professional architectural condition report, commissioned by the Trust in 2023, advised that due to the deteriorating infrastructure of the house and the storage facilities that had been added on over the years, and the extent and deep-seated nature of the rising damp and mould in the roof and walls, that The Firs was not recommended as a space for the display and conservation of such an important and fragile art collection. Post the University of Cape town's decision to exit the Memorandum of Agreement with the Irma Stern Trust, it was decided the collection would move to the Clocktower in the V&A Waterfront. A custom facility with archival racking and shelving, temperature controls and fire safety systems, has been created to safeguard the Collection from further damage and to enable continued restoration.

**Q: What specific interim arrangements have been made to ensure continued public access to Stern's works?**

A: There is a two-year programme of four exhibitions, reflecting a selective chronology of Stern's career, being staged at the Norval Foundation in Cape Town, and exhibiting work drawn from the Collection. A separate recent exhibition of Stern's portraits of Cape Town subjects, also featuring works drawn from the Collection, was shown at Strauss & Co's Cape Town offices at Brickfield Canvas, coinciding with the Cape Town Art Fair.

**Q: Is there a complete catalogue of the work in the Collection?**

A: Yes, the Irma Stern Museum curator has concluded a catalogue of the artist's works.

## **The agreements between the Irma Stern Trust and UCT**

**Q: What specific factors led to the decision to end the 56-year partnership with the University of Cape Town? How will the Trust ensure continuity of the scholarly research and educational programmes that were facilitated through this partnership?**

A: In 2025, The University of Cape Town decided, as was their right within the terms of the original Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed in 1969, to exit the arrangement whereby they managed and staffed the Irma Stern Museum. Given that UCT was responsible for staffing and running the Museum, it was decided to temporarily close the Museum in order to clarify and implement a way forward that maintains and extends the integrity of the Stern Collection and expands the artist's legacy and influence, and undertake the necessary renovation to the Firs. The Trust is planning an expanded and much more widely accessible programme of talks, educational programmes, media, and other partnerships. Much of this will remain located at The Firs when it reopens.

**Q: What was the situation with the stipulated handover clause of a 12 month notice period of the cancellation of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Trust and UCT?**

A: Both parties agreed to waive the 12 month notice period. From the Trust's point of view this was to ensure a more urgent programme of action would be undertaken to prevent further deterioration of the Irma Stern Museum.

**Q: Was there a voetstoots clause regarding the sale of The Firs property?**

A: Yes there is, governed by the following warranties:

### **5. WARRANTIES**

5.1 The Property is sold voetstoots and the Seller gives no warranty with regard thereto, whether express or implied. The Property is furthermore sold subject to such conditions as may be mentioned or referred to in the Seller's Title Deed and/or the relevant Diagram or General Plan. The Seller shall not be responsible to point out any survey beacons or boundaries of the Property to the Purchaser. The Seller shall not be responsible to the Purchaser for any deficiency in the extent of the Property that may be found upon the measurement thereof and in like manner the Purchaser shall be entitled to the benefit of any excess.

5.2 Notwithstanding the above the Seller shall provide the Purchaser with the approved plans prior to the Transfer Date or failing that, no later than 30 (thirty) days after the Transfer Date.

Given that both parties knew the condition of the property before entering into the sale and given that the agreed sale price of the property in the agreement is R1, the voetstoots clause has no legal relevance, since its condition cannot diminish the agreed value of the property in this case.

## **Irma Stern's will and her Trust**

**Q: How are major decisions regarding the Collection made, and what oversight mechanisms ensure accountability in the Trust's operations?**

A: Decisions regarding the Collection are made according to the provisions of Irma Stern's will. The will is held by the Irma Stern Trust, which administers it in accordance with Stern's instructions. The Trust is accountable as any such Trust is, to the fiduciary, regulatory and legal parameters that govern their operations.

**Q: What is the current status of the Trustees of the Irma Stern Trust?**

A: There are 3 trustees appointed to handle the affairs of her Estate. This can be extended to include additional trustees when deemed appropriate. When an Advisory Board/Committee is finalised they will assess the need to appoint additional trustees and/or replace existing trustees.

**Q: The auction sale of works from the Irma Stern Collection in 2022 raised R22 million after costs. How has this money been used to protect and continue Stern's legacy as per her stipulations in her will, and what financial oversight is there regarding these funds?**

A: The proceeds of the auction sale in 2022 have been reinvested to continue the stipulated activities in Stern's will – collection restoration and maintenance, insurance, storage and logistics costs, as well as exhibition and marketing plans for the Stern Collection going forward. These are not expenditures but necessary investments in an important heritage Collection.